

FITNESS

Prevent Golf Injuries

Many people consider golf a low-level physical activity without the possibility of injury ever happening to them. But, there is a potential risk of suffering serious injuries to the elbow, spine, knee, hip or wrist. Before hitting the links, golfers can take some preventive measures to protect themselves against injury.

Golfer's Elbow

Leading the list of injuries is golfer's elbow, and one of the best ways to avoid elbow problems is to strengthen the forearm muscles and slow the swing so that there will be less shock in the arm when the ball is hit by the golfer. To avoid golfer's elbow, the American Academy of Orthopedics Surgeons suggests these simple exercises to help build up your forearm muscles.

- **Squeeze a tennis ball.** Squeezing a tennis ball for five minutes at a time is a simple, effective exercise that will strengthen your forearm muscles.
- **Wrist curls.** Use a lightweight dumbbell. Lower the weight to the end of your fingers, then curl the weight back into your palm, followed by curling up your wrist to lift the weight an inch or two higher. Perform 10 repetitions with one arm, and then repeat with the other arm.
- **Reverse wrist curls.** Use a lightweight dumbbell. Place your hands in front of you, palm side down. Using your wrist, lift the weight up and down. Hold the arm that you are exercising above your elbow with your other hand in order to limit the motion to your forearm. Perform 10 repetitions with one arm, and then repeat with the other arm.

Low Back Pain

Another common complaint among golfers, low back pain, can be caused by a poor swing. The rotational stresses and poor flexibility can place considerable pressure on the spine and muscles. Try these simple exercises to help strengthen the lower back muscles and prevent injuries.

- **Rowing.** Firmly tie the ends of a dyna-band. Place it around an object that is shoulder height (like a door hinge). Standing with your arms straight out in front of you, grasp the dyna-band and slowly pull it towards your chest. Release slowly. Perform three sets of 10 repetitions, at least three times a week.
- **Pull-downs.** With the dyna-bands still around the door hinge, kneel and hold the dyna-band over your head. Pull down slowly toward your chest, bending your elbows as you lower your arms. Raise the dyna-band slowly over your head. Perform three sets of 10 repetitions, at least three times a week.

But perhaps, one of the best ways for golfers to stretch their muscles and avoid injury could be considered old-fashioned. Before your round of golf, engage in some simple stretching exercises, then get a bucket of balls and hit a few golf balls on the driving range. It not only will help your game, but also will make you healthier in the long run.

